

Kennedy and Heller (1905-1913)

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Two of the lesser though bright lights in the botanical galaxy of the United States are P. B. Kennedy and A. A. Heller, the paths of whose orbits briefly converged during the early part of this century. The former died in 1930, the latter in 1944. Both were college trained men whose interests tended strongly although not exclusively toward taxonomic botany.

The years 1905-1913 seem to have been critical ones in the lives of both and are, as indicated by their correspondence, the only years during which their affairs were interrelated. The initiative was Heller's who first wrote on January 5, 1905 from Los Gatos, California, where he was in the printing business, to Kennedy, a professor of botany at the University of Nevada, in Reno, Nevada. Heller was offering specimens for exchange, at least 400 numbers from California collections of the past three seasons. He mentioned he was getting out original descriptions of North American plants, issuing them in series of 500 for \$5.25 postpaid. The first series containing *Ribes*, *Castilleja*, *Artemesia*, and *Trifolium* he expected to be ready in March.

Kennedy, who was then undertaking a monographic study of *Trifolium*, responded immediately asking for both specimens and descriptions, so that on the 25th of the same month Heller wrote again in some detail not only of his own clover collecting which claimed his interest in spite of lack of time (how familiar a complaint) but asking for thorough collections of *Castilleja*, *Lupinus*, and *Ribes*, all of which he intended to study taxonomically.

Correspondence continued intermittently between the two until May, 1907 when Kennedy toured California and was able to spend several days visiting Heller at Los Gatos, collecting with him as far afield as Pacific Grove. The interest of both in *Trifolium* continued unabated even as did that of Laura McDermott, one of Kennedy's students who had gone to the University of California in Berkeley for graduate study.

This common enthusiasm for *Trifolium* seems to have brought the two men together and Kennedy decided to add Heller to the staff at Nevada. By October, 1907 Heller had already expressed his willingness to go to Reno but apparently there was red tape involved for in April of the next year Heller was still writing from Los Gatos and asking when. If it was going to be within two or three months he wanted to devote about all his time to the Catalogue but if later he wanted to do some collecting.

Kennedy seems to have received sympathetically this hint that Heller's living was in part dependent on his botanical collecting and subsequently set Heller to collecting clovers for him, at first in the vicinity of Los Gatos. But

by June the collecting fever had hit Heller hard and he was trying Chico and his other Sacramento Valley places; on June 23 he was just back from southern California and Catalina; and on June 25 he was writing from Yosemite Valley. In July he finally went to Nevada but spent the summer collecting and was not really settled in Reno until the fall of 1908.

Kennedy during this period was tied to his duties at Nevada but found time to write short articles for the journal "Muhlenbergia" which Heller was publishing. This journal, as Heller told his prospective subscribers, Cusick, Blumer, Beattie, Suksdorf, and others, was strictly concerned with systematic botany of the higher plants, in contrast, of course, to such other journals as were then being published. Kennedy joined with Heller in the publishing of "Muhlenbergia" in January, 1909.

Once together at Reno, Heller and Kennedy undertook work on *Trifolium* in earnest and borrowed material from many herbaria, both in the United States and abroad. Although Heller handled a good deal of the detail, the work on *Trifolium* was always referred to as Kennedy's while Heller kept up a running interest in a scattering of large and taxonomically difficult genera always with *Lupinus* a little in the lead. In November, 1911 he wrote W. W. Eggleston in his typically sincere but slightly cocky way "You mention that you are planning to work over *Lupinus*, and I gain from the way you put it that you are thinking of monographing the genus. If you have kept track of "Muhlenbergia" for the past two or three years you will find that I have been working at that genus quite a bit, and have announced my present writings as preliminary to an illustrated monograph. I have been living among lupines for the past nine years, and all that time have been studying the genus in the field, and for over a year have been growing some of them in the greenhouse. Last summer I put in much of my time while in Washington, New York and Cambridge, in looking up the types of *Lupinus* and getting photographs of them. I am putting an article into type right now that should do something toward clearing up the muddle about *L. laxiflorus*, and have settled the status of *L. bicolor* and *L. micranthus* by a special trip to the Columbia River* where I obtained *L. bicolor* from the type locality and typical material of *L. micranthus*. Unless you are able to get a better field knowledge of the genus than I have and a better array of supplementary information in general, you are liable to come out second best in the matter of a monograph. I am giving you this rather lengthy statement of the case in the hope that you will take up some other of the many genera needing an overhauling, and at which no one is working, such as *Phacelia*, *Castilleja*, *Penstemon*, and a host of others. But they should all be illustrated."

During this same period McDermott published her "Illustrated Key to

* Made in May, 1910.

the North American Species of *Trifolium*" which came as a surprise to nearly everyone. To Heller it was a particularly annoying volume because (as he wrote to E. L. Greene) "she recognized only 52 valid species out of 220 described species nearly all the others being worked into new combinations as varieties, and forms of varieties following the 'German system, classifying the plants into species, varieties and forms.'" Heller condemned it as "apparently a deliberate attempt to forestall Kennedy's work on the genus."

"Species crazy" was Kennedy's designation of Heller's taxonomic attitude, and perhaps characterized much of the work of the period. At any rate Kennedy seems to have influenced Heller's conception of taxonomic botany to a considerable degree and both, already strong advocates of field observation before monographic treatment, went so far as to write widely (even abroad) for seed, Kennedy for *Trifolium* and Heller for *Lupinus*, which they grew experimentally in their greenhouse.

The academic year of 1910-1911 was a sabbatical year for Kennedy and he used it for travel both in America and in Europe, especially England where he visited his mother. He was also taken so ill that he was forced to undergo an operation in London. He spent his time searching for types and gathering separates of both grass and legume literature.

In June, 1911, Heller travelled east to Pennsylvania State College where he "went through the ordeal of having a degree conferred in very nice shape, not being required to say anything at all, merely look pleasant and take what was coming to me." While in the East he visited both the New York Botanical Garden and the U. S. National Herbarium and returned to Reno in August to find that Kennedy's return had been delayed by his sickness; he was in Kalamazoo, Michigan, awaiting recovery. This meant that Heller had to undertake a considerable teaching load and was suddenly engaged all at once, in general botany, economic botany, and dendrology.

It may have been the lure of the land that persuaded Heller away from academic life at Reno. He found a piece of land near Oroville, California, and in April, 1913 wrote Kennedy "After looking over the property again am better pleased with it than ever. It is going to be a fine tract shortly." Heller then returned to Reno until June and finishing his duties, resigned and soon was back at Oroville to plant sweet potatoes. In October, 1913, he was writing "Melons grow like weeds here" and in December "We have lots of wet weather which means good botanizing as well as good crops."

Kennedy, himself, was not to stay long after Heller at Reno for in July, 1913, Prof. J. W. Gilmore, of the Division of Agronomy, College of Agriculture, University of California at Berkeley, California, wrote to Kennedy in regard to a position, and by the end of the year arrangements were complete.

On Christmas day in 1913 Heller wrote again to Kennedy, not to Reno but to Berkeley where Kennedy had moved, and this was the last letter for the

paths of life led them away from *Trifolium*, always their common meeting ground. Kennedy was never to move his headquarters again and Heller too remained for the most part in Butte County. It was incidentally also the death knell to the publication of "Muhlenbergia," and to ambitiously planned monographs of *Trifolium* and *Lupinus*.

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Report on Bomb Damage to Botanical Material in England

American botanists will probably be interested in the following excerpts from letters received by one of our members from Dr. Nicholas Polunin of Oxford University.

Dec. 7, 1943. "With regard to the English Botanical gardens I believe I am right in saying that they have sustained comparatively little damage from bombs, though I think I read somewhere of damage to a valuable fern house somewhere in Scotland other than Edinburgh. Here in Oxford we have fortunately escaped so far but Kew lost a good deal of glass and some plants early on. You doubtless heard of the serious damage to the Botanical Department of the British Museum? Most of the material was fortunately saved but several groups of Monocots were, I fear, considerably reduced. Fortunately all type specimens had been removed. I understand that this had not been done in Berlin and that there everything has been lost, which is indeed a tragic blow for our subject."

March 2, 1945. ". . . we remain undamaged in Oxford where our most important ancient Herbaria have been below ground in safety since the summer of 1939. Kew have had some near flying bombs and, latterly, rockets, but so far as I know, no further serious damage. The British Museum of Natural History had a very near-miss flying bomb last summer after which my publisher, Leonard Hill, and I carted off the whole of their Arctic Botanical Collections to safety in his large car, since when there has been no further damage to the Museum. That bomb was indeed a near miss which the roof-spotter thought was coming right into the centre of the museum; but it veered off in the end and fell just in front of the main entrance which was, of course, badly blasted, as was practically every pane of glass in the place! Permanent damage to the botanical collections, however, seems to have been slight and, so far as I am aware, the same is true of such other botanical collections up and down the country as have been at all affected. Here we still have much of the Kew material and staff evacuated."
